



INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY

Vitoria-Gasteiz, March 2019

The Basque Country is a region with close to 2,200,000 inhabitants. In 2018, the Basque police force received 4.362 reports of violence against women committed by an intimate partner or ex-partner and crimes against sexual freedom. These figures are similar to the Spanish State statistics. From 2002 to 2018, 44 women have been killed in the Basque Country victims of gender based violence.

To tackle this situation, which is the highest expression of discrimination against women, there is a coordinated and multisectorial institutional response in the Basque Country. Any woman suffering from gender based violence can use any of the following services:

- **Local Social Services:** the main gateway to all the services available. There are in all Basque municipalities (250). The staff of the Social Services provides information and guide about all the resources available to the victims. Based on the response protocol and on the assessment of each case, they can offer:
 - o **Emergency shelters.** They depend on the Provincial Councils (and on some municipal council too). In all the provinces they have these resources with specialised staff and care services for women and

minors who are known to be at risk. They have room for over 50 people.

- o **Access to temporary housing.** They depend on the Provincial and municipal councils. They have room for over 150 people.
 - o **Specialised psychological assistance** depending on the Provincial Councils (and on some municipalities with a higher population). There are also psychological assistance programmes for perpetrators who voluntarily attend in the three Basque Provinces.
 - o **Legal advice.**
 - o **Financial aid.** Women's victims of gender based violence are entitled to financial aid. These aids are: the **Guaranteed Basic Income** (RGI), processed by the Lanbide-Basque Employment Service and the **Single Payment Aid** processed by the Basque Government's Directorate of Social Services. In 2018 over€1 million were destined to these types of aid.
- **Public housing.** Victims of gender based violence can request for direct allocation of council's public housing or request for regular access to council housing depends on Etxebide-Basque Housing Service.
 - Public **health care centres** in all municipalities distributed by neighbourhoods. They all have protocols for action and the staff receives an on-going training to improve the detection and assistance of women victims of gender based violence. They depend on the Basque Government.
 - **Victim Assistance Service (SAV).** There, victims can receive information about the procedural steps, the rights corresponding thereto, the right to free legal aid, financial aid and social resources that they may avail of. It depends on the Basque Government Directorate of Justice.
 - **Courts.** There are four courthouses specialised in violence against women in the Basque Country.
 - **Basque police stations (Ertzaintza).** In most of the stations there are police officers specialized in gender based violence. All the stations have a

response protocol and the obligation to train their staff on GBV. Among its duties is to carry out a risk assessment of each woman and apply safety measures adapted to each of them, which range from making available an emergency telephone directly connected to the police, to personal bodyguards in particularly serious cases.

- An information and emotional **support helpline** available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

These are, in summary, the available assistance resources.

With regard to those resources, **Emakunde** plays a crucial **role**: to **coordinate the institutional response**. For this purpose, Emakunde has promoted the signing of two "Inter-institutional Agreements for the improvement of assistance for women who are victims of abuse in the domestic environment and of sexual violence" in the years 2001 and 2009. The second agreement was signed by the following institutions:

- Basque Government: departments in charge of social affairs, justice, housing, employment, healthcare and education.
- The three Provincial Councils.
- The Basque Association of Municipalities – Eudel.
- Judicial area (General Council of the Judicial Branch).
- Prosecutor's Office.
- Basque Law Association.
- Basque Medical Association.

This Agreement includes the response protocols to be followed when dealing with women who are victims of violence, as well as a range of commitments to be followed by every signatory institution, including a follow-up of the agreement and the compromise to train professionals from each field of work.

In order to manage this agreement, there is a political Commission where the Ararteko (Ombudsman) and the above mentioned institutions are represented, and a technical support group, which works on the following issues: Homogenising the information collection systems, assistance for minors who are of

victims of violence, women and girls with disability, the specialized training for professionals who deal with women who suffer violence called JABETUZ, among other issues.

Since 2016, Emakunde is also taking part in the United Nations Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence. The aim of this programme is to provide greater access to a coordinated set of essential and quality multi-sectoral services for all women and girls who have experienced gender based violence.

Within the framework the United Nations Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence, the existing services in the Basque Country have been revised through the standards and guidelines for the provision of the quality essential services in the four key areas of 1) health, 2) police and justice, 3) social support services and 4) coordination and governance. Thanks to this exercise, all the participant institutions have known the main obstacles and proposed solutions from others key areas, as well as the good practices develop in some of the areas.

In addition to the functions of coordinating the institutional response, Emakunde also **evaluates** the functionality of the existing resources. Since 2006 eight evaluations have been carried out with the corresponding proposals for improvement (two concerning social resources, police resources, legal resources and legal counsel, psychological resources, healthcare resources, shelter resources and local protocols).

Emakunde also has grants for **associations** to develop projects to prevent and to raise awareness concerning violence against women. Other grants to assist women having suffering violence are given by the Basque Government Department of Employment and Social Policies.

Likewise, another fundamental task of Emakunde regarding violence against women is **prevention**. This is done through all its actions as a whole, as all the actions aimed at advancing towards equality mean a step towards eradicating violence built on the foundation of inequality. Among the prevention actions carried out by Emakunde, there are some more directly aimed at eradicating violent behaviours and attitudes. They are the following programmes:

a) **Nahiko** is a co-educational programme for equality, respect and the prevention of violence in the educational environment. It is a comprehensive programme to work in 1st to 6th year primary school classrooms (children aged between 6 and 12). The programme is organised in quarterly educational units to work in the classroom and each one of them contains:

- o A guide for teachers
- o Games
- o Notebooks for pupils and families.

The programme seeks to improve coexistence and relationships between pupils by developing the full autonomy of each boy or girl; by assuming responsibility in all aspects of life; building relationships without violence; analysing and reflecting on reality and relationships from a gender perspective and working on new masculine identities without violence.

Since its creation, more than 160 centers and over 12000 students between the ages of 6 and 12 have participated. It has been externally evaluated by the University and it has identified significant results, among which they highlight: that girls and boys who have participated in the programme consider equality as a source of rights and obligations; they link it to good treatment, respect and non-violence and improved their self-esteem results; physical and verbal aggressiveness was reduced and their levels of empathy improved (particularly among boys).

b) **Beldur Barik** is the name of the Campaign for November 25th, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, which has been carried out since 2009. It is an inter-institutional program which, in addition to Emakunde, involves the participation of the Department of Education, Language Policy and Culture of the Basque Government, the three provincial councils and numerous municipal councils, and the University of the Basque Country.

It consists on an annual campaign for the prevention of violence against young women and its main characteristics is that is designed by young

people which extend beyond November 25th. Its aim is to generate thought processes and debates among young people to identify the different facets of gender violence, in order to transform and build individual and collective attitudes and behaviours that allow them to overcome situations of inequality and violence. It promotes the empowerment of girls by providing them with tools and resources so they can know about and recognise gender violence and works with boys on the prevention of sexist behaviour, encouraging them to play an active role when faced with sexist aggressions.

The main actions of the programme are centred around an audiovisual competition which seeks to recognise, praise and promote material that shows how girls and boys face up the current situation of inequality with attitudes and behaviour based on respect, equality, freedom, co-responsibility and a firm rejection of violence; and the *topaketa*, an event where the prizes are handed out to the winners of the competition, that also works as a space for raising awareness through workshops with interesting topics for young people.

This process is being developed at Autonomous Community level, but also at a local level, where each year the number of municipalities gets involved and organise their own competition and *topaketa increases*.

At the same time educational material and a variety of actions that pursue the same goals are being developed.

c) **Gizonduz** is a forerunner initiative launched in 2007 promoted by Emakunde to involve men in the promotion of equality and action to counter violence against women. Since then, some 6,500 men have participated in the training program; more than 10,000 men have signed the Charter of the Basque men for equality and against violence towards women; around 30,000 backpacks with awareness-raising materials have been distributed to parents to foster equal and shared parenting; the number of pro-equality groups of men has increased significantly in the Basque Country; a video game has been designed to discourage sexist and violent behaviour among young people; a significant presence on the internet and in the social media has been achieved and more than 5,000

people like the Facebook page. Furthermore, there have also been numerous awareness-raising activities, publications, etc. Finally and with regard to professional's training, Emakunde runs Jabetuz an online training programme for professionals who take care of women victims of gender violence. The aim of this programme is to standardize the different approaches of the all the professionals involve in the attention to women victims of violence against women, besides the fact that the programme by itself facilitates an effective inter-institutional coordination and contributes to develop a better response to those women. Since its creation in 2015, there have been 5 editions and over 500 people have participated.

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Further information: www.emakunde.euskadi.eus/violencia

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